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## **US geopolitical imperatives for the Baltic region**

***By: Sabina Garashova***

BAKU STATE UNIVERSITY, AZERBAIJAN, BAKU

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### **Abstract**

The scientific article discusses the geopolitical interests of the United States in the Baltic region. First of all, it is noted that the Baltic states are distinguished by their complex geopolitical character. The region in which the Baltic republics are located has become a proving ground for a dangerous confrontation between the USSR and the USA. After gaining independence, the Baltic republics headed in the direction of the European Union. These republics were able to achieve more effective integration with European structures. First of all, two important facts testify to this. Since the Baltic republics in a short time were admitted to the membership of the European Union and NATO. It also shows that Western structures attached great importance to this region. Especially the USA had clear geopolitical imperatives in the region. Accordingly, all-round contacts were established in different directions.

**Keywords:** Baltic region, US, Russia, antagonism, European Union, NATO, integration.

### **Introduction**

The position of the Baltic states in the modern system of international relations can be assessed as rather complex. Thus, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are located in a region where countries are involved in harsh geopolitical confrontations. The Baltic states, which gained independence on the eve of the collapse of the USSR, were able to successfully and comprehensively integrate into Western

Europe. It should be emphasized that the serious interest of the Baltic countries in Western structures made the integration process more dynamic. Most researchers believe that the Baltic countries initially and culturally belong much more to the West. Despite the fact the Baltic states were annexed by the Tsarist Russia in the 19th century, they almost completely preserved their national-cultural characteristics almost unchanged.[6, p.8]

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Geopolitical characteristics of the Baltic region that he would confront with the US troops in case of intervention in the region.[5, p.2]

Geopolitical characteristics of the Baltic region

In May 2004, the Baltic states became members of the European Union. They are also members of NATO. Thus, it can be argued about the formation of the Baltic-Adriatic outpost of the European Union and NATO. Most researchers have the right to point out that the accession of the Baltic States to NATO and the European Union will create serious problems for Russia in the political, economic and military spheres. Thus, successful integration in this direction has significantly strengthened the political, economic and military-strategic positions of the United States in the region. As in other post-Soviet areas, its main strategic goal with respect to the Baltic region was the elimination of Russia's domination there and the expansion of its military sphere of influence to the borders of Russia. This point also proves that the main line of the overall US strategy in the post-Soviet space is to prevent Russia from trying to restore its former dominance. In addition, the main goal of the US strategy for the Baltic countries was to persistently exclude Russia from the region. Thus, the probability of Russia's intervention in the region was again taken into account in the United States quite seriously. Such concerns have intensified after the annexation of Russia in the Crimea and military operations in the south-east of Ukraine. For example, Z. Brzezinski, one of the key defining strategy strategists of the United States, notes that the United States and its allies must deploy troops in the Baltic region to prevent possible Russian interventions. He adds that Putin wants to regain control of the Baltic states and stresses that his sudden actions in this direction could put NATO in insolvency. Z. Brzezinski further clarifies his opinion and says: "I recognize the likelihood that Putin and the capture

of Tallinn by Putin will one day become realistic. At that time, we could only criticize him and refrain from nuclear war. " Putin should know that he will stand up to US forces in the event of intervention in the region. [5, p. 2]

It is obvious that the United States and Russia have experienced a different history of relations with the Baltic countries. The fact is that Russia has a rather long history of relations with the countries of the region. And the United States has a significantly shorter experience in relations with the Baltic countries. Despite the fact that among the post-Soviet countries only the Baltic countries (except Russia) had a certain history of relations with the USA. The United States recognized the independence of the Baltic states and established diplomatic relations with them as early as 1922. [10, p.211] The United States was the first great force to recognize the independence of the Baltic countries. It should be emphasized that the United States did not recognize the accession of the Baltic states to the USSR in 1940. Sumner Wells, Assistant Secretary of State, strongly condemned him in a special statement and stressed the elimination of the political and territorial integrity of the Baltic states. Wells said that the American people opposed the intervention of any major powers in the internal affairs of weak states. An interesting fact is that the embassies of the Baltic states in the United States continued to function even after their annexation by the USSR and the United States, recognizing them only as legitimate entities. It is clear that it was during this period that the United States fought against the expansion of the influence of the USSR, where the communist regime became increasingly consolidated. The United States has always considered the Baltic countries a part of Europe. Already in September 1991, t. E. Before the collapse of the USSR, US President George H.V. Bush announced that his country is ready to cooperate with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. This fact indicates that the United States isolated the Baltic countries from other post-Soviet countries and paid special attention to them. This is evident from the fact that the United States did not refer to the Baltic states to "new independent states". Immediately after the collapse of the USSR, the United States began to make serious attempts so that the Baltic countries could integrate as much as possible into Western structures. Of course, priority in this direction was given to their entry into the European Union and NATO. The United States also launched a number of special projects aimed at ensuring the reliable integration of the Baltic States into NATO and the European Union. The Baltic Action Plan (August 1996) and the Northern Europe Initiative (September 1997) can be noted as the most important of them. [1]These projects considered supporting to democratic reforms in the Baltic states and strengthening US relations with them. Expanding regional economic cooperation in the Baltic region was one of the issues the US paid special attention. Thus, the sovereignty of the Baltic states was believed by the US establishment to be much dependent on this particular point. Nevertheless, the US demonstrated more efforts for strengthening its military-political positions in the region. The US surely preferred realizing these imperatives through NATO. So, it was initiated to take consistent measures

towards the admission of the Baltic states to membership of NATO within a short period. As a first step, the Baltic states were involved in Partnership for Peace Program of NATO and in March 1994 the US lifted the embargo on re-exportation of US weapons to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. And the most serious US military-strategic step towards the Baltic states was the signing of the agreement on military cooperation with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 1995. This agreement created great opportunities for the US to enjoy direct military influence in the region. So, the agreement covered provisions such as assistance to the Baltic states on capacity building of military personnel, intensive seminars and consultation on security issues. The US was also serious about establishing and developing military cooperation among the countries of the region themselves. We believe that by this the US also aimed at establishing region's common military power to control from a single headquarters. Generally speaking, the US achieved in establishing comprehensive military cooperation with the Baltic states and among these countries themselves. The Baltic states from their side also demonstrated active initiatives for establishment and development of military cooperation with Western powers. For instance, in October 1991, i.e. two months prior to the collapse of the USSR, during meeting with Manfred Wörner, Secretary General of NATO the chairman of the Estonian Supreme Soviet conveyed his country's intentions to join the coalition. But, Baltic states did not officially file a request for NATO membership between 1991 and 1993 when Russian troops were still in the region. Lithuania filed an official request for joining to the coalition in January 1994, only after Russian troops left the country. Western powers from their side also did not believe that it was reasonable to admit the Baltic states to the coalition given the Russia's military presence in the region. The US considered the presence of Russian troops in the region as a serious threat to their sovereignties. The US officials conducted intensive negotiations with their Russian counterparts for the full withdrawal of Russian troops from the region. The US also offered Russia its material and technical assistance in withdrawal of Russian troops possibly soon from the Baltic states. Russia ended its military presence in the Baltic region only in 1999 by dismantling its last radar installation in the region. [11]

These projects considered supporting democratic reforms in the Baltic countries and strengthening US relations with them. The expansion of regional economic cooperation in the Baltic region was one of the issues to which the United States paid special attention. Thus, the sovereignty of the Baltic countries, in the opinion of the American establishment, strongly depends on this particular moment. Nevertheless, the United States has shown more efforts to strengthen its military-political position in the region. The United States, of course, preferred to implement these imperatives through NATO. Thus, the adoption of successive measures to admit the Baltic states to NATO membership in a short period of time was initiated. As a first step, the Baltic countries participated in the NATO Partnership for Peace program, and in March 1994, the United States lifted the embargo

on the re-export of US weapons to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. And the most serious US military strategic step towards the Baltic states was the signing in 1995 of an agreement on military cooperation with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. This agreement created great opportunities for the United States to have direct military influence in the region. Thus, the agreement covered provisions such as assisting the Baltic countries in building the capacity of military personnel, intensive seminars and security consultations. The United States also takes seriously the establishment and development of military cooperation between the countries of the region. We believe that this way the United States also sought to establish a common military power of the region to control from one headquarters. Generally speaking, the United States has achieved the establishment of comprehensive military cooperation with the Baltic countries and the countries themselves. For their part, the Baltic states also demonstrated active initiatives to establish and develop military cooperation with the Western powers. For example, in October 1991, t. E. Two months before the collapse of the USSR, during a meeting with NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner, the chairman of the Estonian Supreme Council conveyed his country's intention to join the coalition. But the Baltic countries did not officially apply for NATO membership from 1991 to 1993, when Russian troops were still in the region. Lithuania filed a formal request to join the coalition in January 1994, only after Russian troops left the country. For their part, the Western powers also did not believe that it was reasonable to admit the Baltic states to the coalition, taking into account Russia's military presence in the region. The United States viewed the presence of Russian troops in the region as a serious threat to their sovereignty. US officials conducted intensive negotiations with their Russian colleagues for the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from the region. The United States also offered Russia material and technical assistance in the withdrawal of Russian troops, perhaps in the near future from the Baltic countries. Russia stopped its military presence in the Baltic region only in 1999, dismantling its latest radar installation in the region. [eleven]

#### US-Russia antagonism over the Baltic region

All Russia's attempts to prevent Baltic countries from joining NATO turned out to be ineffective. The countries of the region openly stated that their security could only be provided through coalition with NATO and the EU. In response to Russia's pressure on the Baltic states, the US signed the Charter on Cooperation with Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in January 1998. It was underlined in the Charter that the United States was firmly interested in the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The document also defines the Baltic states' full integration into European and Transatlantic political, economic and military structures as a common goal.[4] The Charter was very important for the parties in determining the outlines of cooperation between the US and the Baltic States in the XXI century. During the signing ceremony of the Charter on Cooperation US

President B. Clinton mentioned that the US was persistent in creating necessary conditions for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to join NATO.[12] This, once again, demonstrated that admission of the Baltic states to NATO was the basic line of the US strategy for the region.

The US appeared particularly active to involve the Baltic states in NATO after G. Bush won presidential election. The Baltic states initiated individually to take intensive measures to harmonize with NATO standards. Lithuanian Saeima, in its turn, also amended Article 137 of the national constitution prohibiting the deployment of foreign military bases in the country. At NATO Summit in Paris, November 2002 Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia were invited to join the organization. In March 2004 these countries became full members of NATO. US President G. Bush called the admission of new members, including the Baltic states to NATO in 2004 as a great historical and political event. He mentioned that the new members of NATO had got a chance to become more powerful.[8] The admission of the Baltic states to NATO membership was assumed as a 'wake-up call' in Russia. Thus, after coalition membership of the Baltic states, which are situated in quite proximity to St. Petersburg and Moscow, Russia somehow felt as 'driven to the wall' in the Baltic Sea. Moreover, Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation become enclave amid NATO and EU member states. Therefore, the admission of the Baltic states to NATO and EU membership can be evaluated as a major geopolitical setback of Russia. So, enlarged through the Baltic states, NATO significantly boosted its positions and expanded opportunities to get access to the Baltic Sea.

Antagonism between the USA and Russia over the Baltic region

All Russia's attempts to prevent the Baltic countries from joining NATO proved ineffective. The countries of the region have openly declared that their security can be ensured only through a coalition with NATO and the EU. In response to Russian pressure on the Baltic countries, the United States signed a Charter on Cooperation with Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia in January 1998. The Charter emphasized that the United States was firmly interested in the sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The document also defines the common integration of the Baltic states into European and transatlantic political, economic and military structures as a common goal [4]. The Charter is very important for the parties in defining the contours of cooperation between the United States and the Baltic countries in the 21st century. During the signing ceremony of the Charter on Cooperation, US President B. Clinton mentioned that the United States is persistent in creating the necessary conditions for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to join NATO. [12] This once again demonstrated that the recognition of the Baltic states in NATO is the main line of the American strategy for the region.

The United States has been particularly active in involving the Baltic states in NATO after G. Bush won the presidential election. The Baltic countries have



initiated individually to take intensive measures to harmonize with NATO standards. In turn, the Libyan Saeima has amended article 137 of the national constitution, which prohibits the deployment of foreign military bases in the country. At the NATO summit in Paris in November 2002, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia were invited to this organization. In March 2004, these countries became full members of NATO. US President G. Bush called the recognition of new members, including the Baltic countries, NATO in 2004 a great historical and political event. He noted that the new members of NATO had a chance to become more powerful [8]. The admission of the Baltic states to NATO membership was taken as an “awakening” in Russia. Thus, after the coalition’s membership in the Baltic states, which are located in close proximity to St. Petersburg and Moscow, Russia somehow felt itself “hanging from the wall” in the Baltic Sea. In addition, the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation is becoming an enclave among NATO and EU member states. Therefore, the adoption of the Baltic states into NATO and EU membership can be regarded as a serious geopolitical failure of Russia. Thus, NATO expanded through the Baltic countries significantly increased its position and expanded access to the Baltic Sea.

The US reached one of its important geostrategic goals with this. So, the US obtained quite steady military-political positions in the region after that. This fact suggests that the US obtained the opportunity to have a real impact on Baltic states’ foreign policy conduct after the admission to NATO and the EU. At that point Baltic states’ major geostrategic importance for the United States was associated with their suitable role of buffer zone between Europe and Russia. And the US managed to take the sound measures to create a buffer zone from these countries. By including the Baltic states into its sphere of influence, the US acquired a strategic position to exert control over Russia’s behavior to some extent. With NATO membership, the Baltic states formed eastern end of the coalition and so, NATO reached to north-western borders of the Russian Federation. That is to say, north-western parts of Russia’s territory partially became accessible for NATO. Thus, radiolocation stations have been installed in the territories of Latvia and Estonia, which allows keeping the distance of 460 km under surveillance. Russian soldiers report that the stations are much more functional. The stations provide transmission of real time information on the situation in the air space to the NATO command point. All these facts show that Russia has experienced serious geopolitical defeat in Baltic region. Today, the format and level of relations of the Baltic states with Russia are almost regulated by Washington. Absence of capabilities by the Baltic states to freely establish ties with Russia evidence the above-mentioned argument. Thus, the West appreciates the Baltic states’ escape from the Russian sphere of influence and their successful integration into Western structures and democratic reforms. We believe that most accepted and sympathetic approach prevailed in the West regarding the Baltic states is connected with their escape from Russia’s sphere of influence. Russia

surely wanted the Baltic states to be at least neutral and made lots of efforts to this end. However, results were completely in favor of the United States.

Our studies and observations show that during the first term of Obama's presidency, attitude of the US administration towards the Baltic states has weakened. It should be noted that during B. Obama's first term of office, US commitment throughout the entire post-Soviet space decreased to some extent. This is mostly explained by the fact that the democrats in the first place put forward the provisions of democratic reforms and human rights and this was met with a mixed perception by the post-Soviet regimes. Behaviors of the leaders of the Baltic states did not fully satisfy the B.Obama administration. Even though the Baltic presidents were always welcomed guests in the White House during administrations of previous presidents, B.Obama never received them during his first term. Obama received the presidents of the three Baltic states just before the visit to Russia in August 2013. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Baltic states, in their turn, are not totally satisfied with the position of the US taken towards them during Obama's presidency. The Baltic states try to justify their dissatisfaction referring to the following arguments:

To this end, the United States achieved one of its important geostrategic goals. Thus, after this, the US gained fairly stable military-political positions in the region. This fact indicates that the United States was able to exert a real influence on the foreign policy of the Baltic countries after joining NATO and the EU. At that moment, the most important geostrategic importance of the Baltic states for the United States was due to their suitable role as a buffer zone between Europe and Russia. And the USA managed to take reasonable measures to create a buffer zone from these countries. By including the Baltic states in their sphere of influence, the United States acquired a strategic position in order to somehow control its behavior over Russia. Upon joining NATO, the Baltic states formed the eastern end of the coalition, and therefore NATO reached the north-western borders of the Russian Federation. That is, the north-western parts of the territory of Russia became partially accessible to NATO. Thus, radar stations were installed in the territory of Latvia and Estonia, which allows monitoring at a distance of 460 km. Russian soldiers report that the stations are much more functional. The stations provide real-time information on the situation in the airspace to a NATO destination. All these facts show that Russia experienced a serious geopolitical defeat in the Baltic region. Today, the format and level of relations between the Baltic States and Russia are almost regulated by Washington. The lack of opportunities for the Baltic countries to freely establish relations with Russia testifies to the aforementioned argument. Thus, the West highly appreciates the exit of the Baltic countries from the Russian sphere of influence and their successful integration into Western structures and democratic reforms. We believe that the most acceptable and sympathetic approach prevailed in the West, since the Baltic states are connected with their escape from the sphere of influence of Russia. Russia, of course, wanted the Baltic states to



be at least neutral and make a lot of effort to do this. However, the results were fully endorsed by the United States.

Our research and observations show that during the first term of the Obama presidency, the attitude of the US administration towards the Baltic countries has weakened. It should be noted that during the first term of Barack Obama's office, the obligations of the United States in the entire post-Soviet space have somewhat decreased. This is mainly due to the fact that the Democrats first of all put forward the provisions of democratic reforms and human rights, and this was met with a mixed perception of the post-Soviet regimes. The behavior of the leaders of the Baltic countries did not fully satisfy the administration of Barack Obama. Despite the fact that the presidents of the Baltic countries have always welcomed guests to the White House during the administrations of previous presidents, B. Obama never received them in the first term. Obama received the presidents of the three Baltic states shortly before his visit to Russia in August 2013. However, the leaders of the Baltic countries, in turn, are not fully satisfied with the position taken by the United States during the Obama presidency. The Baltic countries are trying to justify their discontent, citing the following arguments:

First, there is the argument that the decaying US attention to Europe as a whole is challenging the development of transatlantic relations. It should be noted that the official circles of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe sometimes stated that the United States mainly pursued its own interests and was interested in them and were indifferent to their positions;

Secondly, it is interesting that the strategic document entitled "Maintaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century" (2012) draws attention to Europe, contrary to all expectations. As the title states, a document prepared by the Pentagon defines the strategic objectives of the US Department of Defense for the next decade in order to maintain global US leadership. The document prioritizes the strategic interests of the United States, taking into account large-scale military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the situation in North Africa and the Middle East. The fully 16-page document allocates only a small part for Europe, and the speech of President B. Obama does not apply to either Europe or NATO. [14] And this moment caused anxiety in the Baltic states, which from time to time were subjected to Russian pressure.

Thirdly, the Baltic states consider weaker enthusiasm for the expansion of NATO in recent years by the United States, which contradicts their interests. The Baltic states, considering the policy of "open doors" of NATO as a prerequisite for the creation of a transatlantic collective security system, believe that in the post-war period, B. Obama is the first US president who does not care about the policy of NATO expansion. Generally speaking, it should be mentioned that they are confident in Europe itself, that the problem of transatlantic security is not an important priority for the B. Obama administration [9, p.2]

Almost neglect of Europe and NATO in the above document means some important points. First of all, this once again proves that the United States initially seeks to maximize the opportunities of Europe and NATO to ensure its global leadership and intends to be the only world leader that, most importantly, without any role and influence of Europe.

It should be noted that the arguments regarding the existence of special geopolitical plans of the United States for Europe are heard quite often. G. Friedman, a political analyst and chief intelligence officer of the famous Stratfor think tank in his book *The Next 100 Years: Forecast for the 21st Century*, justifies Poland as the main strategic ally of the United States. The United States will fully support Poland. A political analyst compares the future relations of the United States and Poland with those of the United States with Israel, Japan and South Korea. [7, p.78] B. Jakeson, another analyst, also believes that the United States is interested in creating a new coalition with a tough stance towards Russia and an emphasis given to Turkey and Poland [3, p.15] Indeed, reality shows that the United States is quite actively using Poland against Russia.

The Baltic countries rely on the United States and Europe for their sovereignty and security issues and, given these realities, are concerned about this. Thus, it is assumed that with the provision of global leadership, the United States will give them much less attention. NATO membership and expansion of cooperation with the United States were identified as priorities in the national security strategies of the Baltic countries, and it is obvious that, given the Russian "close proximity", they perceive the weakened US attention to them in the future as a troublesome thing for their national security. As already mentioned, the insufficient attention of the Barack Obama administration to the region caused disappointment in the countries of the region. Belōki, J. Kerry, the current US Secretary of State, has made about 30 trips to Eastern Europe since his appointment in 2013, which has attracted the attention of the Baltic countries. The Baltic countries and other Eastern European countries all have special expectations from the United States. Primary expectations may be as follows:

- The United States should send its high-ranking representatives to the region to demonstrate its special attention to the problem of transatlantic security;
- After completing its mission in Afghanistan, the United States must ensure that security cooperation with Eastern European countries, in particular with the Baltic countries, does not weaken;
- To ensure security more reliably, the United States must develop new areas of military cooperation with the Baltic countries, etc.

With V. Putin's coming to power, Russia was revived and became more actively involved in international relations. Although Russia is not perceived as a direct military threat to Europe in these conditions, its future strengthening creates problems. Such problems are more obvious in the Baltic countries. Thus, it is clear that Russia wants to regain its influence in the post-Soviet space. From this point of

view, for the Baltic countries that have experienced more than 50 years of Russian hegemony, it is important to act together with the United States. We believe that at this stage the Russian threat to the Baltic countries seems quite real. Russia is actively using the energy factor to exert pressure on the Baltic countries, which are completely dependent on Russia for gas supply. [13] Moreover, the Baltic countries consider Russia's intentions to generate and strengthen ethno-separatism in the region as a serious threat to their national security. Apparently, at present, the Baltic states have good reasons to consider the United States as their main guarantor. And the United States, in turn, intends to achieve the maximum separation of these countries from Russia using the tools it has. As already mentioned, the United States regards the Baltic region, like other post-Soviet regions, as a suitable tool for monitoring Russia's behavior and limiting its influence in the international arena. It can also be considered that the Baltic region is a strategic part of the "anaconda ring" through which the USA tried to surround Russia. Taking into account the possible military intervention of Russia in the region, the USA paid special attention to the substantial development of the military potential and defense systems of the countries of the region. For example, the Baltic battalion was created with the direct support of the West in 1994. The battalion, mostly known as "Baltbat", consists of soldiers from all three Baltic countries with the main goal of ensuring regional security. This point once again proves that the geopolitical strategies of the United States in relation to different post-Soviet regions are part of a common strategy and have common features. Thus, the United States prefers the post-Soviet countries to independently solve their security problems with Russia. The United States limits itself to material and technical assistance. As already mentioned, the United States tried to damage Russia's position in the region by establishing Georgia independently against Russia in August 2008, without directly entering into the conflict.

The United States cooperates with the Baltic countries not separately, but as a single subject. This is explained by the fact that all three countries face the same regional threat (Russia), and their coordinated actions can be effective in eliminating the threat. In addition, it was believed that the joint receipt of weapons and ammunition would be useful for the Baltic countries.

It should be noted that the failure of the Russian "reset" policy and the reverse trend in creating a military-political point of support for the United States in Central Asia forced the United States to pay more attention to the region. This change in US policy was made during the second term of the Obama presidency. The main concern in the United States is that Russia still has the potential to exert influence in the region. From this point of view, the United States is making every effort to strengthen its position in the Baltic region, which is the only real stronghold against Russia at the present time. The main strategic step of the United States was to ensure its permanent military presence in the region. The reality suggests that the Baltic countries themselves are also interested in deploying American forces in the region. So, in October 2014, the Estonian Minister of Defense openly called the

West to protect the Baltic countries from Russia. Minister Sven Mikser explained this by the frequent violation of air and water space by Russian military aircraft and submarines. The minister even accused Russia of returning to the Cold War. And Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė called Russia a terrorist state. [2] In the spring of 2014, after the annexation of Russia in Crimea, the United States deployed its armed forces in the Baltic countries. The United States justified its move by protecting the region from the threat of Russia, which was rated as quite realistic. Initially it was thought that American troops remained in the Baltic states until the end of 2014. However, Ben Hodges, commander of the US Army in Europe, later said that in 2015 military forces would remain in the Baltic countries. The American side explained this reason for preventing Russian aggression and ensuring the security of its allies.

In general, the Baltic countries have repeatedly repeated their desires regarding the permanent stay of NATO forces in the region. This issue was raised at the NATO summit in Wales. NATO politicians believe that after the annexation of Crimea by Russia, the entire eastern flank of the alliance is under serious threat. It was reported that this threat was particularly severe for the Baltic countries. Thus, Russia's desire to regain control over the entire post-Soviet space is clear from its behavior. The native Russian-speaking population living in the region may be the main reason for Russia's military intervention.

#### Conclusions

As can be seen from the above, the USA is demonstrating constant efforts to strengthen its comprehensive political, ideological, economic and military positions in the Baltic countries, as in other post-Soviet countries. The United States has already managed to convince the Baltic countries that the United States is a more reliable partner for them. The main goal of the US geopolitical strategy for the Baltic countries was also to prevent Russia from trying to reach a possible turning point. We believe that the United States achieved this goal in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia more effectively than other post-Soviet countries. Thus, as we have already mentioned, only the Baltic countries (as well as Ukraine since the end of 2013) do not establish a cooperative relationship with Russia outside the control of the United States. Of course, it should be mentioned that, on the whole, the Baltic states are almost not interested in developing relations with Russia and always evaluate military intervention from the Russian side completely realistic. The Baltic countries began to take such a threat seriously after the annexation of the Crimea and the situation in the south-east of Ukraine. One of the main problems causing serious concern in the Baltic countries is that they view the suspension of energy supply at any moment as a real risk. From this point of view, considerable energy dependence on Russia complicates the situation in the Baltic countries. The West, in turn, does not dispute its concern regarding the Baltic countries. Therefore, the deployment of US military bases in the region can be seen as an indication of serious concern of the West. In general, we believe that the future situation in the Baltic countries can se-

riously affect the geopolitical outlines of the European Union than in Ukraine. These countries form the geopolitical borders of the European Union. Today, when it comes to geopolitical activity, Russia openly relies on its army in this matter, and in the future it will be more obvious. From this point of view, there is no guarantee that Russia will not use open military rhetoric against the Baltic states. As already mentioned, Russia from time to time violates the air and water space of the Baltic states, and this is becoming a trend.

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